

THE EARLY CHRISTIAN IVORIES
OF THE EASTERN EMPIRE

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OF THE few early Christian ivories in American collections, Dumbarton Oaks possesses perhaps the most important. This is a pyxis, a cylindrical box, carved with reliefs of Moses receiving the Law, and Daniel in the Lions' Den (Fig. 1). Its importance is both stylistic and iconographic: its style belongs to a category whose significance we may note later on; in point of iconography it is unique in the literal rendering of Daniel vi, 22: "My God hath sent his angel, and hath shut the lions' mouths, that they have not hurt me" (Fig. 2). The artist has improved on the text by representing two angels instead of one, each shutting the mouth of his own lion. This rendering occurs but once elsewhere in the early Christian period, and no example of later date has as yet been discovered by the Index of Christian Art.¹

The pyxis belongs by style within a group of ivories transitional between the reliefs of the bishop's throne in Ravenna, well-known as the Cathedra of Maximianus, and another group associated with another object in Ravenna, the ivory book-cover from Murano. Its stylistic parallels are fairly close and obvious: e.g. a pyxis at Leghorn² carved with a representation of the Multiplication of Loaves and Fishes, and another Daniel-pyxis³ in the British Museum (Fig. 3). All of these ivories are linked together to a certain extent by style, and much more firmly by an unmistakable iconographic tradition. Where they were made is still a moot point in early Christian archaeology. They have been assigned to centers as far west as Italy and as far east as Antioch.⁴ They constitute the majority of early Christian ivories altogether, and nearly the entire major output of Christian art in this medium during the sixth century. The question of their provenance is consequently something that early Christian archaeology cannot leave alone, and this paper returns to the hack-

¹ The pyxis came originally from the abbey-church of Moggio in the Veneto. It was published by L. Venturi in *L'Arte*, XIV (1911), pp. 469 ff., figs. 1-3, exhibited at the "Art of the Dark Ages" exhibition of the Worcester Art Museum in 1937 and illustrated as no. 57 in the catalogue of that exhibition which was published in the same year. The other instance of the literal rendering of the Daniel-scene is on an ivory pyxis from Nocera Umbra, in the Museo delle Terme, Rome (J. Strzygowski, *Orient oder Rom?*, Leipzig 1901, fig. 40).

² G. B. De Rossi, *Bullettino di archeologia cristiana*, 1891, p. 47, pls. IV-V. This pyxis is said to have been found at Carthage.

³ O. M. Dalton, *Catalogue of Ivory Carvings of the Christian Era* (British Museum), London, 1909, p. 11, pl. VIII.

⁴ An extensive bibliography has been collected by C. Cecchelli in the most recent publication of the Cathedra ivories, *La Cattedra di Massimiano ed altri avori romano-orientali*, Rome, 1936-38 (3 fascicules only have appeared).

neyed problem, with such hope of solution as may be offered by a more complete survey of the evidence, especially the iconographic evidence, than has hitherto been made.

The Cathedra of Maximianus (Fig. 4)⁵ is so well-known that we need only to have its salient features recalled: thirty-nine ivory panels (exclusive of borders) on a wooden frame; the front displaying in five niches the figures of John the Baptist and the four Evangelists; the two sides decorated each with five panels containing the episodes of the history of Joseph; the inner and outer faces of the chair's back originally adorned with twenty-four scenes of the Life of Christ, — eight on the inner and sixteen on the outer face, — of which the half are now lost. In the center of the upper border of the front is carved a monogram whose most convincing reading is MAXIMIANVS EPISCOPVS, and since the Cathedra is in Ravenna, it is natural to suppose that it was made for Archbishop Maximianus of Ravenna, who died in 556 and was the only bishop of Ravenna of that name. This has been qualified by evidence tending to identify the Cathedra with an episcopal chair decorated with ivory carvings that was sent by the Doge Orseolo II from Venice as a present to the Emperor Otto III, at that time sojourning in Ravenna, in 1001.⁶ The identification is plausible; but if it be correct, it must be referred to a restoration of the Cathedra to its original location, since the evidence that the chair belonged to Maximianus is apparently incontrovertible.⁷

There is reason, however, to believe that the actual execution of the Cathedra may be dated somewhat earlier than the life-time of Maximianus, in the first decades of the sixth century or even c. 500, in view of the affinity of its style with that of what are known as the "Greek" consular diptychs.⁸ Consular diptychs were souvenirs given to their families and

⁵ A detailed description, together with the history of the chair and the loss and recovery of part of its panels, is given in the work of Cecchelli cited in the preceding note. This writer assigns the Cathedra to Egypt, but has not developed his argument, in the fascicules which have hitherto appeared, beyond the evidence furnished by ornament. The more recent monograph by G. W. Morath (*Die Maximians-Kathedra in Ravenna*, Freiburg i/B 1940) is less complete, and based on a somewhat out-dated conception of early Christian iconography and style. The brochure is noteworthy for its excellent section on the assimilation of Joseph to the Egyptian Serapis in early Christian literature, and in the Joseph-scenes of the Cathedra.

⁶ C. Ricci, "Avari di Ravenna," *Arte italiana decorativa e industriale*, VII (1898), pp. 42ff.

⁷ Previous attempts to interpret the monogram as referring to other bishops, viz.: (a) John of Alexandria (Cortenovis), (b) Maximus of Salona (Martroye), (c) Maximianus of Constantinople (Bulić), are refuted by Cecchelli (*op. cit.*, pp. 33 ff.). Gerola's discovery of the monogram in almost identical form on an impost-block found in the archiepiscopal palace at Ravenna is assurance that the monogram is local and peculiar to Maximianus (G. Gerola, "Il monogramma della cattedra eburnea di Ravenna," *Felix Ravenna*, 1915, pp. 807 ff.).

⁸ The monogram is in Latin, while the assembly-marks on the ivory panels of the Cathe-

friends by the consuls on their appointment to the office. They consisted of two ivory plaques hinged together, on which (at least in the ruling type of Greek diptychs in the early sixth century which show most affinity to the Cathedra's style) was carved a representation of the consul seated as presiding officer of the *circenses*, holding the napkin which he threw down as a signal for the games to commence. The series of consular and other diptychs, extending from c. 400 to c. 550, is a very valuable field of reference for early Christian stylistic chronology; a whole category of Latin Christian art has been dated c. 400–425 by comparison with the Latin diptych of Probianus of c. 400 A.D.,⁹ and Greek works such as the panels of the Cathedra can be safely placed in the period c. 500–530 by their resemblance to the above-mentioned Greek diptychs. After the foundation of Constantinople the custom arose of naming one consul in the eastern capital, the other at Rome: it is a curious fact that the existing diptychs of the fifth century were almost all issued by consuls proclaimed at Rome, while those of the sixth, of the type mentioned above, were all commissioned by eastern consuls with the single exception of the diptych of Orestes, consul at Rome in 530 (Fig. 5).¹⁰

This diptych raises the interesting question of the provenance of these Greek diptychs. Orestes' diptych is practically a replica of one of Clementinus (Fig. 6), a consul proclaimed at Constantinople in 513.¹¹ Did Orestes have a copy made of Clementinus' diptych, or were these ivory

dra are Greek numerals or letters. If we add to this the fact that the monogram, relative to the rest of the carving of the frieze of which it occupies the center, is in shallower relief and shows adjustment to the ornament on its right (Cecchelli, *op. cit.*, p. 72), we may conclude that the chair was executed in a Greek workshop, imported to Ravenna, and the monogram added there. (One is reminded by this of the "ivory thrones" included among the presents sent by Bishop Cyril of Alexandria in the fifth century to officials of the court at Constantinople in furtherance of his intrigues; P. Batiffol, "Les présents de Saint Cyrille à la cour de Constantinople," *Bulletin d'ancienne littérature et d'archéologie chrétiennes*, I, 1911, pp. 247 ff.) We thus arrive at a dating possibly earlier than the years of Maximianus' administration (546–556). The consular diptychs which best exhibit the style of the Cathedra are those of Areobindus (proclaimed at Constantinople in 506), Clementinus (Constantinople 513), Anthemius (*ibid.* 515), Anastasius (*ibid.* 517), Magnus (*ibid.* 518), Orestes (Rome 530); cf. R. Delbrueck, *Die Consulardiptychen und verwandte Denkmäler*, Berlin, 1929, pp. 23 ff., 107 ff.; nos. 9–14, 16–22, and 32; see also Edw. Capps, Jr., "The Style of the Consular Diptychs," *Art Bulletin*, X (1927), pp. 61 ff. It is to be noted that since the diptych of Orestes might be considered imitative of one of Clementinus (Delbrueck no. 16), the authentic purveyors of the style among the diptychs can be grouped early in the sixth century, confirming thus the above-mentioned indications of a dating for the Cathedra earlier than the dates of Maximianus.

⁹ Delbrueck, *op. cit.*, no. 65; A. C. Soper, "The Italo-Gallic School of Early Christian Art," *Art Bulletin*, XX (1938), pp. 145 ff.

¹⁰ Delbrueck, *op. cit.*, no. 32.

¹¹ Delbrueck, *op. cit.*, no. 16; Capps, *op. cit.*, p. 99.

objects made up in bulk, and then bought by the consuls as occasion arose? There is much in favor of the latter supposition. The representation of the consul in the diptychs is no portrait to order, but a mere formula, essentially identical throughout the series. Moreover, the names and titles of the consul which appear on a tabella reserved for this purpose at the top of each plaque, in Latin (Latin being still the language of officialdom in the Eastern Empire at this time) are *incised* in a rather scratchy fashion, as an obviously subsequent addition, which indicates that the diptychs were manufactured in quantity and inscribed as ordered. This makes it unnecessary to assume that they were made at the time when, or even the place where, the consul was to be proclaimed. The close similarity between the diptychs of Orestes, western consul in 530, and of Clemen-tinus, eastern consul in 513, might be cited as evidence to the contrary.

Since, however, all but the diptych of Orestes were issued by consuls of Constantinople, and his diptych might be a replica of that of Clemen-tinus, or merely an import from Constantinople to Rome, it is possible on the other hand to suppose that the series was manufactured in Constantinople. If we could be sure of this, we could comfortably implement the outstanding stylistic vacuum of early Christian art, viz., the output of the ateliers of Constantinople in the sixth century, since the consular diptychs would not only date, but carry with them in their school, not alone the Cathedra of Maximianus, but the extensive series of ivories and other works that can be stylistically connected with it. But there is also the possibility, given the uncertainty of local connection mentioned above, that the diptychs were done somewhere else and imported by the eastern consuls to Constantinople, and by Orestes to Rome. This was the conclusion of Edward Capps, Jr., who assigned the series to an Alexandrian atelier.¹²

The attribution of the diptychs to Alexandria, or at least to an atelier of Alexandrian style and tradition operating in Constantinople, is supported by some very serious considerations. In the first place, it is necessary to recognize the unity of style existing between the diptychs and the ivories of the Cathedra and further, the unity of these with what may be called the Cathedra-group, — pyxides, plaques, book-covers, diptychs, scattered through the museums and libraries of Europe and America — a unity which need not be demonstrated here, since it has been accepted by all students of this problem.¹³ With this as an initial datum, our material becomes

¹² Capps, *op. cit.*, p. 100.

¹³ A partial list of the ivories connected in style with the Cathedra is given by Capps, "An Ivory Pyxis in the Museo Cristiano and a Plaque from the Sancta Sanctorum," *Art Bulletin*,

very extensive, and while the style of all these ivories is identical enough to be monotonous, their iconography is varied and significant. Those students who have questioned an Alexandrian provenance for this group of ivories, have either ignored the iconographic evidence, or lacked the control thereof which is afforded by the Index of Christian Art. If we eliminate a number of iconographic types whose connection with Egypt might be called in question, there remains an irreducible minimum that seems to make impossible any other local inspiration of the art of the Cathedra group.

The immediate relatives of the Cathedra in this group, by style, are the Wiesbaden pyxis¹⁴ and the pyxis of St. Menas in the British Museum (Fig. 7).¹⁵ The former is carved with motives of distinctly Egyptian character, a personification of Egypt who rests her arm upon a sphinx, and the figure of Father Nile himself, seated beside the river whose identity is proclaimed by a crocodile and lotus-plants. The pyxis of the British Museum is in the same style, and carved with scenes of equally Nilotic reference, viz., the trial and martyrdom of Menas, titular saint of the famous pilgrimage shrine near Alexandria. To these episodes is added the figure of the saint in orant attitude, standing in his tomb between two kneeling camels, and thus repeating the type that was the routine decoration of the terracotta ampullae obtained by pilgrims to his shrine, which they filled with miracle-working water from a nearby well.¹⁶ The pyxis seems therefore to be an item of pilgrimage-trade, doubtless sold to the pious who visited his Alexandrian shrine, and meant to contain some souvenir or relic of St. Menas which was potent for physical or spiritual ills.

The Raising of Lazarus in early Christian art regularly represents the resurrected man bandaged in grave-clothes which cover his head as well as his body, and standing upright in a tomb that is either a gabled aedicula, or the opening of a cave.¹⁷ But on the ivories of our group Lazarus is always bare-headed, and stands in a tomb which is more like a coffin and resembles nothing so much as an Egyptian mummy-case of Roman

IX (1927), p. 339. There are some omissions, e.g., the large pyxis (Christ and apostles; Sacrifice of Abraham) and the "sacred" diptych in the Kaiser Friedrich Museum, and the archangel plaque of the British Museum. Also absent from Capps' list are ivories with non-Christian subjects such as the pyxis of Wiesbaden and the Barberini plaque (mounted emperor) in the Louvre.

¹⁴ C. R. Morey, *Catalogo del Museo Sacro della Biblioteca apostolica Vaticana I: Gli oggetti di avorio e di osso*, Città del Vaticano, 1936, p. 11, fig. 2.

¹⁵ O. M. Dalton, *Catalogue of Ivory Carvings* (British Museum), p. 11, pl. VII.

¹⁶ C. M. Kaufmann, *Zur Ikonographie der Menas-Ampullen*, Cairo, 1910, p. 63.

¹⁷ E. Baldwin Smith, *Early Christian Iconography and a School of Ivory-carvers in Provence*, Princeton, 1918, pp. 108 ff., table VIII.

times. Furthermore, this is the way he is represented on an ivory comb found at Antinoë in Egypt, — the only early Christian ivory whose east Christian provenance is known (Fig. 8).¹⁸

In the Entry into Jerusalem, early Christian art always represents the Saviour riding on an ass in whose path the young men of Jerusalem are spreading a mantle. Always, save for the series of ivories we are discussing, for on these it is a rug, not a mantle, that dignifies the pathway of the Lord (Fig. 9). The only other place in early Christian art where this rug is employed in this scene is a carved wooden lintel of the ancient Coptic church of El Moallaqa at Cairo.¹⁹

It is tempting here to include the many iconographic types current in our group of ivories, for which, while such proof is lacking as is afforded by the instances cited above, there exists a strong presumption of Egyptian origin and peculiar usage. Such are: the rendering of the Annunciation with Mary seated at the left; the presence of the apocryphal doubting midwife Salome in the Nativity (Fig. 10); the inclusion of the river-god Jordan in the scene of the Baptism; the addition of the Virgin and two servants to the episode of the miracle of the Wine at Cana, omitting, however, the wedding-feast, as in the frescoes of Antinoë in Egypt (Fig. 11); the standing, instead of sitting, posture given to Evangelists (Fig. 4);²⁰ the singular introduction into scenes of Christ's life, of the figure of an evangelist as narrator, or of a prophet as foreteller, — the one holding a book, the other a scroll (Fig. 12).²¹ But we may omit these, to point out what seems to be the outstanding differential of Christian iconography in Egypt: the beardless, short-haired Christ (Fig. 12).

At the time our ivories were carved, there were three ways of portraying the Saviour in the Eastern Empire. One of them was the beardless head with long hair falling on the shoulders that seems derived from an antique Dionysiac type like that used in the second century as a portrait of Hadrian's favorite Antinous. This we know was already in use in Constantinople at the end of the fourth century and in the fifth, from its appearance on the few sculptures of the time that have been unearthed at the capital city and its neighborhood, — notably a sarcophagus-end at Berlin with the figure of Christ standing between two apostles (Fig. 13).²²

¹⁸ J. Strzygowski, *Catalogue général des antiquités égyptiennes du Musée du Caire: Koptische Kunst*, Cairo, 1904, pl. XVII.

¹⁹ E. Baldwin Smith, *Early Christian Iconography*, etc., p. 126.

²⁰ A. M. Friend, "The Portraits of the Evangelists in Greek and Latin Manuscripts," *Art Studies*, 1927, pp. 115 ff.

²¹ E. Capps, Jr., *Art Bulletin*, IX (1927), p. 333.

²² C. R. Morey, *Sardis V: The Sarcophagus of Claudia Antonia Sabina and the Asiatic Sarcophagi*, Princeton, 1924, p. 30, fig. 25.

What was the usage in Anatolia, Mesopotamia, Syria and Palestine before the sixth century we have no means of knowing, since the single representation of Christ antedating 500 that exists in these regions is the figure in the fresco of the Healing of the Paralytic at Dura, of the third century, so poorly preserved that we cannot tell whether the face is bearded or not.²³ But in the sixth century there is no doubt, from examples of each of these regions, that Christ was represented with a beard. The third, the beardless head with short hair, is the oldest type of all, being that employed by the earliest of the frescoes in the Roman catacombs that include the Saviour in their representations, and this Hermes-like conception maintained itself in Italy even into a sporadic survival in the sixth century, though in losing competition with the Constantinopolitan long-haired youth and later on, with the Syro-Palestinian bearded head, which had already arrived in the mosaics of Rome by the end of the fourth century.²⁴ The single cycle of early Christian art of the sixth century where the beardless short-haired Christ is the dominant type, is our series of ivories, in which also he is often further differentiated by carrying a sceptre-cross. That this was Egyptian usage is shown by the employment of the same head in the frescoes of Antinoë and Bawit.²⁵ It is true that the Syro-Palestinian bearded type occasionally made its way into Egyptian Christian iconography, no less than into Italian, as for example on an ivory book-cover in our group at Paris (Fig. 14) and the "sacred" diptych of Berlin,²⁶ and in late Coptic frescoes and panel paintings,²⁷ but the fact remains that Egypt, if only by exclusion, is the only early Christian area where the beardless short-haired portrait was the norm. In a miniature of the Cotton Genesis of the British Museum, to which an Egyptian origin is ascribed by a surprising unanimity of opinion among early Christian archaeologists, this type of Christ appears, a curly-haired

²³ The description by P. V. C. Baur, "The Paintings of the Christian Chapel," *Preliminary Report V, Excavations at Dura-Europos*, New Haven, 1934, pp. 254 ff., pls. XXXIX-L, does not inform us on this point.

²⁴ In the apsidal mosaic of S. Pudenziana, c. 390 (E. W. Anthony, *A History of Mosaics*, Boston, 1935, p. 66, fig. 18). In view of the modernization of the "Constantinian" apse of the Lateran, and the probable fifth-century date of the lateral apses of S. Costanza, this may be considered the earliest datable instance of the bearded type of Christ in Rome.

²⁵ Cf. e.g., the cross-nimbed rendering of the Lord in the fresco of the "Ascension" at Bawit, illustrated in W. de Gruneisen, *Les caractéristiques de l'art copte*, Florence, 1922, figs. 32-33.

²⁶ O. Wulff, *Altchristliche und byzantinische Kunst*, Berlin, 1914, I, fig. 198.

²⁷ Cf. the Christ in late Coptic Baptisms: in fresco (Grüneisen, *op. cit.*, pl. XXXII, 2); in panel-painting (Golenishev collection, Leningrad; A. Bauer and J. Strzygowski, "Eine alexandrinische Weltchronik," *Denkschriften der Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Wien*, phil.-hist. Kl. LI, 2, 1906; fig. 36).

youth with sceptre-cross in hand, enacting the Lord in the Third Day of Creation (Fig. 15).²⁸

The foregoing demonstrates the impossibility of leaving Egypt out of any conclusion on the provenance of our ivories. But what of the inconvenient presence among them of the diptychs of consuls of Constantinople who might be supposed to have got them at home?

It is this unpleasant archaeological fact that impelled Weigand, ignoring iconography, to ascribe the diptychs and all the ivories of the Maximianus-cathedra group, to Constantinople or the regions of Asia Minor within its circle of artistic influence.²⁹ There lately appeared in *Archaeologia*³⁰ an extremely able article on Coptic sculpture by Kitzinger, which brought the most convincing confirmation that has yet been published for an origin in Egypt of the style of the Cathedra-group, by citing excellent parallels in figure-style and ornament on a wooden door from the church of S. Barbara in Old Cairo and a pilaster from Bawit in the Louvre (Fig. 16). But he, too, ignoring iconography, concludes that these remarkable identities prove no Alexandrian style, but one of Constantinople imitated in Egypt, although there exists nothing in or of Constantinople with which to compare his pilaster or his door.

The conclusion of the whole matter seems to be that the style and iconography of the diptychs and Cathedra-ivories is Egyptian, and that, in view of their superior style, their school is of Alexandrian rather than of Upper Egypt. That they were made in Constantinople by an atelier of Alexandrian tradition and training is possible in view of the cosmopolitan character that we must predicate in any case of this melting-pot of the Eastern Mediterranean. Edward Capps canvassed this possibility for the consular diptychs; von Falke and Schlunk considered it probable for the Cathedra.³¹ If we accept this solution, we are aided in classifying what may be called the poor relations of the Cathedra-group, viz., the ivories that are associated in style with the book-cover of Murano (Fig. 17).³²

²⁸ W. R. Lethaby, "The Painted Book of Genesis in the British Museum," *Archaeological Journal*, LXIX (1912), pp. 162 ff.

²⁹ E. Weigand, *Kritische Berichte zur kunstgeschichtlichen Literatur*, 1930-31, pp. 33 ff.

³⁰ E. Kitzinger, "Notes on Early Coptic Sculpture," *Archaeologia*, LXXXVII (1937), pp. 181 ff., pls. LXXVI, LXXVII. The ornament on the doors of S. Barbara is cited by Cecchelli (*op. cit.*, p. 76) in support of an attribution of the Cathedra to Egypt.

³¹ H. Schlunk, *Berichte aus den Preussischen Kunstsammlungen*, LX (1939), pp. 1 ff.; O. von Falke, "Der Elfenbeinthron von Maximianus in Ravenna," *Pantheon*, XXI (1938), pp. 149 ff. A review of opinion on the provenance of the Cathedra and related ivories is given by Cecchelli, *op. cit.*, chapter V, pp. 59 ff.

³² O. M. Dalton, *Byzantine Art and Archaeology*, Oxford, 1911, p. 210.

These ivories represent the end of a decadence that attacked the Cathedra-group soon after the creation of the masterpiece that gives it its name. The bold and Hellenistic modelling of the earlier ivories was reduced to a flat and scratchy linearity. The slump in style is well represented by the comb from Antinoë, but best shown in two book-covers from a common atelier but now far apart, one decorating the binding of a Carolingian gospel-book in Paris (Fig. 14), the other that of an Armenian evangelary in Etschmiadzin.³³ Subsequent to such examples comes the sub-group to which belongs the pyxis of Dumbarton Oaks, still retaining something of Alexandrian impressionism in its rapid delineation, but beginning to turn the figures to frontality, to drill the eye instead of using the Cathedra's device of a blocky projection wherewith to catch the light and animate the glance, reducing the freer movement and the flow of drapery of the earlier style, to formula. An outstanding example of this phase was published in the *Art Bulletin* by Griffing, a relief of St. Peter imbedded in a reliquary of a church in Cyprus.³⁴ In this we see a further return of the style to primitivism, a development of forms of undifferentiated smoothness and roundness, and disproportionate elongation. The Hellenistic three-quarters pose of the head is brought to sharp frontality, the eyes become round and staring, with lower and upper lids symmetrical in emphasis and curve. Hair is turned into a stylized wig. Movement, which had already lost the dignity of the Cathedra's reliefs in the transitional ivories imitating their style, becomes lively and jerky, like the gestures of a mechanical doll. The iconography shows increasing use of Asiatic concepts, as when a plaque in the British Museum³⁵ presents the Adoration of the Magi in the symmetry it assumed on the oil-flasks sold to pilgrims to the holy places of Palestine, — the Madonna frontally enthroned, an angel and one Magus approaching on one side, and two Magi on the other (Fig. 18). The Egyptian rendering on the Cathedra ivories puts the Virgin on one side, with the Magi and their introducing angel advancing in file.³⁶

Assuming that the Cathedra ivories, within that limited group that retains an even tenor of Hellenistic style, were the product of an Alexandrian atelier transplanted to Constantinople, whence issued the consular diptychs of the "Greek" type in the early years of the sixth century, we

³³ J. Strzygowski, "Das Etschmiadzin-Evangeliar," *Byzantinische Denkmäler* I, Vienna, 1892; O. Wulff, *op. cit.*, p. 188, fig. 185.

³⁴ The monastery church at Kikko. R. P. Griffing, Jr., "An Early Christian Ivory Plaque in Cyprus and Notes on the Asiatic Ampullae," *Art Bulletin*, XX (1938), pp. 266 ff., fig. 3.

³⁵ O. M. Dalton, *Catalogue of Ivory Carvings* (British Museum), p. 12, no. 14.

³⁶ E. Baldwin Smith, *Early Christian Iconography*, pp. 48 ff., table II.

could quite plausibly consider the latter members of the series, such as the book-covers of Paris and Etschmiadzin, the pyxis of Dumbarton Oaks and its relatives at Livorno and in the British Museum, as products of less qualified ateliers still operating in Egypt, slipping into a decadence which was avoided by the Cathedra artists, stimulated as they were by the metropolitan patronage of Constantinople, and issuing finally in the return to primitivism that is manifest in the book-cover of Murano and its related group, whose marked modification of the style may well reflect a migration of the center of the school from the Delta to Upper Egypt. It is certain that the manner of this last category is very close in appearance to the Coptic frescoes of Bawit and Saqqara. But equally unmistakable is the continuity of types that links the Cathedra ivories, the transitional ones which we may call the Dumbarton Oaks group, and the Murano book-cover group in a clear-cut iconographic tradition. Throughout this whole gamut of style there persists the short-haired beardless type of Christ, the flying angels supporting a wreath inclosing the cross or a bust of Christ, the peculiar rendering of the Raising of Lazarus, the midwife Salome in the Nativity, the sceptre-cross with which the Saviour performs his miracles, and a number of other hall-marks of Egyptian iconography. Whether manufactured in Egypt or in Constantinople, the whole series, comprising the bulk of early Christian ivories, are representative of style and iconography that is Egyptian and originated in Alexandria.

But the location of the Cathedra atelier in Constantinople has somewhat more in its favour than the evidence of the consular diptychs. It would explain, for instance, that proto-Byzantine monumentality and deliberate movement which one notes in the figures of the Cathedra's reliefs, — a Neo-Attic dignity which is not readily associated with Alexandria, reminding one far more of the miniatures of the early Christian manuscripts of Asiatic provenance. This may have had much to do with Wulff's curious attribution of the Cathedra to a "Syrian workshop in Alexandria."³⁷ It would also go far toward resolving the puzzle of the Alexandrian motifs of iconography that keep turning up on monuments that are otherwise with good reason assigned to Constantinople. Messrs. Martin, Parkhurst and Smyth, who have been for the past year investigating the provenance of the imported sarcophagi of Ravenna, and that of the alabaster colonnettes that support the canopy of the high altar in St. Mark's at Venice, are strongly inclined to attribute these monuments to Constantinople on grounds mainly of style and such archaeological and historical

³⁷ O. Wulff, *op. cit.*, p. 191.

evidence as is available.³⁸ The renderings of scenes in all these works reveal an iconography mostly Asiatic it is true, but very largely Alexandrian as well. Thus, in the Annunciation on one of the Ravennate sarcophagi, the Virgin is seated at the left; she regularly stands at the right, in works of the Asiatic East. The Alexandrian element on the forward pair of altar colonnettes in St. Mark's is even more pronounced: Christ wears the short curly hair of the Cathedra ivories; the midwife Salome is present at the Nativity; in the Annunciation, though she stands as in Syrian and Palestinian renderings, she is placed to the left after the manner of Alexandria.

Constantinople, of all the great centers of the Empire, is the one where we might expect such eclectic mixtures. It was founded after the primitive phase of early Christian art had passed. As in all new cities, its culture was for an enduring period eclectic and exotic. The immigration of artists was encouraged from the time of Constantine. The first churches of the new capital were built after the basilical pattern of those which Constantine erected in Rome over the graves of the Princes of the Apostles; the central plan of Justinian's buildings followed, on the other hand, a precedent which the same Constantine had set in his great octagonal church, the *Domus Aurea*, at Antioch. The new center drew its craftsmen perforce from the older metropolises of the Empire.

Let us examine a case of this eclecticism in an authentic product of Constantinople, dating in the early years of the sixth century, the epoch that concerns us here. This is the well-known manuscript of the *Materia Medica* of Dioscurides, in Vienna, whose miniatures were executed for a certain great lady of the capital city, Anicia Juliana.³⁹ Without going into the complicated evidence on which Buberl produced his masterly elucidation of these miniatures, we may call attention to two of them, and

³⁸ This research on the Venetian colonnettes and the Ravennate sarcophagi has not yet issued in printed form, and has been made public only through papers read by Messrs. Martin and Parkhurst at the symposium held in the Frick Gallery, New York, in February, 1939. In these papers Mr. Martin demonstrated a dating in the thirteenth century for the installation of the colonnettes, the carving of the posterior pair, and the cutting of the inscriptions, introducing thus the hypothesis that the forward pair were part of the loot brought to Venice after the sack of Constantinople by the paladins of the fourth crusade in 1204. Mr. Parkhurst, summarizing results so far obtained by himself and Mr. Smyth, identified the two hands to be detected in the style of the anterior colonnettes, and in a paper later read before the Journal Club of the Department of Art and Archaeology at Princeton, outlined a tentative chronology for the sarcophagi of Ravenna, and the evidence for the provenance from Constantinople of the imported pieces.

³⁹ A. von Premerstein, K. Wessely, J. Mantuani, *Dioscurides, Codex Aniciae Julianae . . . phototypice editus*, Leyden, 1906; A. von Premerstein, "Anicia Juliana im Wiener Dioscurides-Kodex," *Jahrbuch der kunsthistorischen Sammlungen des allerhöchsten Kaiserhauses*, XXIV (1903), pp. 105 ff.; E. Diez, "Die Miniaturen des Wiener Dioscurides," *Byzantinische Denkmäler*, III (1903), pp. 1 ff.

accept without further question his demonstration of their origin.⁴⁰ One of them (Fig. 19) represents Dioscurides seated in a chair, indicating with enthusiastic hands the mandrake-root held by a standing female labelled Heuresis or "Discovery"; at her feet is a dog, which, according to ancient legend, paid with his death for unearthing the root. This picture, Buberl has shown, was copied from an earlier herbal by Krateuas (the portrait of Krateuas doing duty for Dioscurides), whose text is incorporated into the compilation which passes under the authorship of Dioscurides. To match this picture, the scriptorium that put together this heterogeneous manuscript, or its immediate model, contrived another miniature (Fig. 20) which again depicts the seated physician (this time an intended portrait of Dioscurides), with a personification of Epinoia (Reflection) beside him, engaged in watching an artist who paints a reproduction of the mandrake on an easel.

Half-tones of these two pictures fail to bring out clearly an important difference. The first miniature has a spacious background, with that characteristic contrast of an architectural feature, in this case a tower, with hills and the graduated atmosphere of a sky, which we usually find in Hellenistic landscape; the other shuts off its space with a colonnaded portico. Now these two ways of managing a background belong to the two divisions of Hellenistic art in later antiquity; the Alexandrian architectural landscape familiar to us in the frescoes of Pompeii,⁴¹ and the limiting wall or colonnade that was an Asiatic qualification of the neutral background which Neo-Attic style, the second of the two divisions mentioned, inherited from Attic art. This kind of background was carried through the art of Asia Minor from the second to the end of the fourth century by the long series of Asiatic sarcophagi.⁴² The latest member of this series, dating c. 400 A.D., we have already seen in the sarcophagus-end in Berlin with the figure of Christ and two apostles, standing in the niches of a colonnade (Fig. 13); one may see the other setting, a rolling landscape interrupted by architecture, still surviving in the frescoes of Antinoë in Egypt, a century later (Fig. 11). The process whereby these two currents could fuse into a single stream, or more properly, the final absorption of the Alexandrian open space by the Neo-Attic closed interior, is curiously illustrated in the mosaics of Antioch. In one of these, now at the Worcester Museum, we have a symposium of Bacchus and Hercules (Fig. 21); Bac-

⁴⁰ P. Buberl, "Die antiken Grundlagen der Miniaturen des Wiener Dioscurideskodex," *Jahrbuch des deutschen archäologischen Instituts*, LI (1936), pp. 114 ff.

⁴¹ M. Rostovtzeff, "Die hellenistisch-romische Architekturlandschaft," *Mitteilungen des k. deutschen archäologischen Instituts, Romische Abteilung*, XXVI (1911), pp. 1 ff.

⁴² C. R. Morey, *Sardis V: The Sarcophagus of Claudia Antonia Sabina*, Princeton, 1924.

thus triumphantly inverting his wine-cup to show that the last drop was drained, the unsteady Hercules still drinking, but obviously not standing up to the test.⁴³ The group is placed in open atmosphere, with no limitation of any kind. But a century later, the same scene is repeated in another mosaic, wherein the growing Neo-Attic influence on Antiochene art is visible in the introduction of a wall at the back which transforms the Alexandrian unlimited space into the inclosure of a room (Fig. 22).⁴⁴

So also, by the reverse of this process, was the Neo-Attic native tradition of Constantinople enriched with Alexandrian style, by the simple means of a copy from an earlier miniature, in the illustrations of the Dioscurides of Vienna. The domestication of this influence from Egypt may possibly be seen as well in the frame that surrounds the portrait of Anicia Juliana decorating the dedication-page, for this frame is a synco-pation of an inter-looped combination of lozenges and circles familiar in the frescoes of Bawit.⁴⁵ It was the further inter-mingling of these two factors, the conservative Hellenism of the Neo-Attic and the free impressionism of Alexandria, that constituted the essential genesis of Byzantine style, and the problem of the East Christian ivories which we have been considering is only one of the questions that must be answered in order to reconstruct in credible fashion the initial stage of this amalgamation, which amounts to saying that in some way or other we must find out what was going on in the art-world of Constantinople in the fifth and sixth centuries A.D.

⁴³ *Antioch-on-the-Orontes I* (ed. G. W. Elderkin), Princeton, 1934, pp. 42 ff., pl. VI and frontispiece (in color).

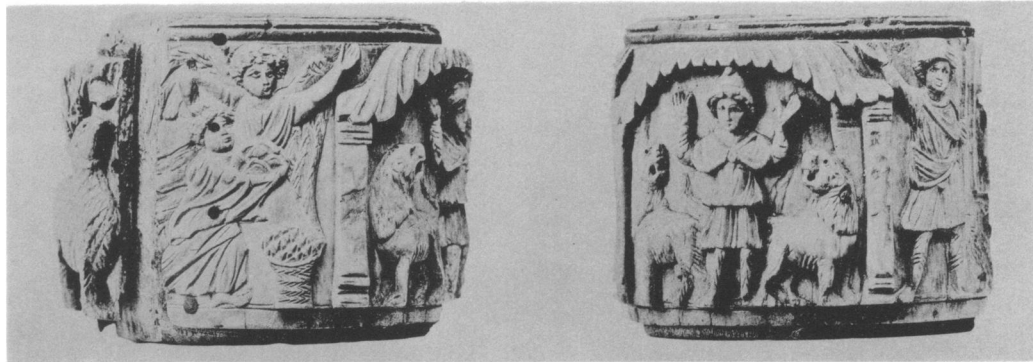
⁴⁴ This is the first reproduction of this mosaic, which will be published in the forthcoming third volume of *Antioch-on-the-Orontes* (ed. R. Stillwell).

⁴⁵ J. Clédât, "Le monastère et la nécropole de Baouît," *Mémoires de l'Institut français d'archéologie orientale du Caire*, XII (1904-6), pls. LXVI-LXXI.

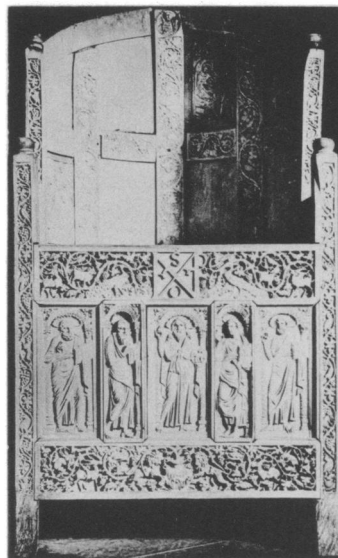


1. WASHINGTON, DUMBARTON OAKS,
IVORY PYXIS: MOSES RECEIVING THE LAW

2. WASHINGTON, DUMBARTON OAKS,
IVORY PYXIS: DANIEL IN THE LIONS' DEN



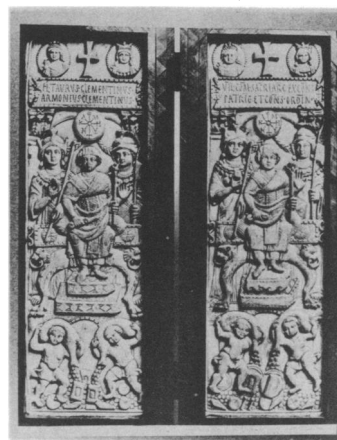
3. LONDON, BRITISH MUSEUM, IVORY PYXIS: STORY OF DANIEL AND HABBAKUK



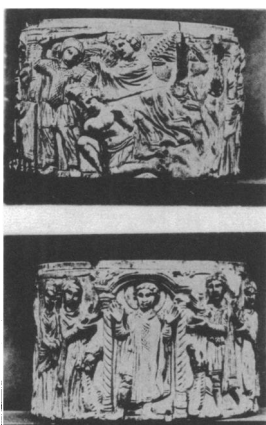
4. RAVENNA, ARCHBISHOP'S PALACE,
CATHEDRA OF MAXIMIANUS



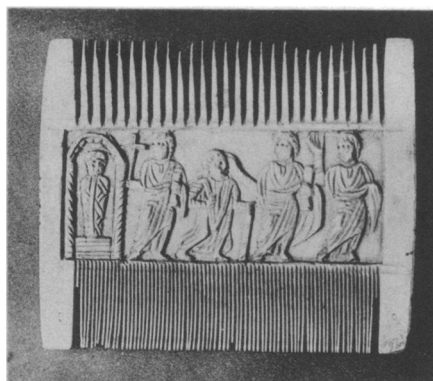
5. LONDON, VICTORIA AND ALBERT MUSEUM: CONSULAR DIPTYCH OF ORESTES



6. LIVERPOOL, FREE PUBLIC MUSEUM: CONSULAR DIPTYCH OF CLEMENTINUS



7. LONDON, BRITISH MUSEUM, IVORY PYXIS: STORY OF ST. MENAS



8. CAIRO, MUSEUM, IVORY COMB: RAISING OF LAZARUS; HEALING OF THE BLIND



9. RAVENNA, ARCHBISHOP'S PALACE, CATHEDRA OF MAXIMIANUS: DETAIL, CHRIST ENTERING JERUSALEM



10. RAVENNA, ARCHBISHOP'S PALACE, CATHEDRA OF MAXIMIANUS: DETAIL, NATIVITY



11. ANTINOË, FRESCOES: FLIGHT INTO EGYPT; MIRACLE OF CANA; RAISING OF LAZARUS



12. RAVENNA, ARCHBISHOP'S PALACE, CATHEDRA OF MAXIMIANUS: DETAIL, CHRIST AND THE SAMARITAN WOMAN



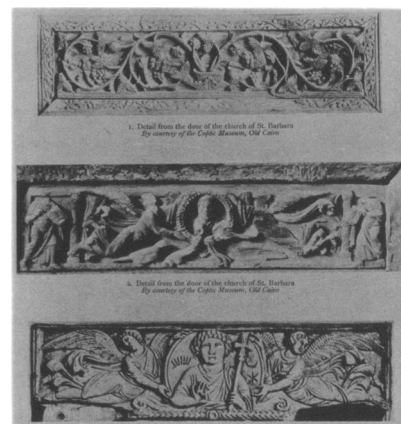
13. BERLIN, KAISER FRIEDRICH MUSEUM, SARCOPHAGUS RELIEF: CHRIST AND APOSTLES



14. PARIS, BIBLIOTHÈQUE NATIONALE, IVORY BOOK-COVER: CHRIST AND MIRACLE SCENES



15. PARIS, BIBLIOTHÈQUE NATIONALE, COPY OF A MINIATURE IN THE COTTON GENESIS: THIRD DAY OF CREATION



16. COMPARISON OF COPTIC SCULPTURE WITH IVORIES OF THE CATHEDRA TYPE (AFTER KITZINGER)



17. RAVENNA, NATIONAL MUSEUM,
IVORY BOOK-COVER FROM MURANO:
CHRIST WITH PAUL AND PETER; HIS
MIRACLES; JONAH SCENES



18. LONDON, BRITISH MUSEUM, IVORY
PLAQUE: THE ADORATION OF THE MAGI



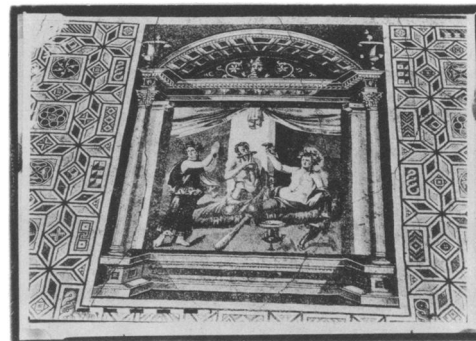
19. VIENNA, NATIONAL LIBRARY,
"MATERIA MEDICA" OF DIOSCURIDES:
DIOSCURIDES AND "DISCOVERY"



20. VIENNA, NATIONAL LIBRARY,
"MATERIA MEDICA" OF DIOSCURIDES:
DIOSCURIDES AND "REFLECTION"



21. WORCESTER (MASS.) ART MUSEUM,
MOAIC FROM ANTIOCH: SYMPOSIUM OF
HERCULES AND BACCHUS, C. A.D. 100



22. PRINCETON UNIVERSITY, MOAIC
FROM SELEUCIA (ANTIOCH): SYMPOSIUM
OF HERCULES AND BACCHUS, C. A.D. 200